

Statement by Hon. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Hearing on: The Future of the U.S.-Pakistan Relationship
Before the Committee on Foreign Affairs
May 5, 2009

I will focus my remarks on the outcome of the recent review and its implications for policy going forward.

We are united in our goals.

We want a:

- long-term partnership with a modern, prosperous and democratic Pakistan that is at peace with itself and with its neighbors;
- a Pakistan that maintains robust controls over its nuclear weapons technology; and
- a Pakistan that does not provide safe haven to al Qaeda, the Taliban, and other Islamist militant extremists.

While command and control of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is presumably a top concern of Islamabad, recent Taliban advances underscore the critical importance of ensuring security for its nuclear materials and technology.

As Secretary Clinton testified recently, the nuclear weapons have been dispersed throughout Pakistan, increasing the risk that these may find their way to al-Qaeda, Taliban, or other Islamist extremists.

We must redouble our efforts on Pakistan's technical and human security capacity, so as to ensure there is a robust safeguards mechanism in place for its nuclear weapons program and facilities.

The stakes are simply too high to ignore.

The administration has endorsed Senate proposals to increase non-military assistance to Pakistan to \$1.5 billion over the next five years.

When combined with existing or contemplated assistance programs, total U.S. aid to Pakistan – including reimbursements to the Pakistani military by the Department of Defense – would total at least \$3.5 billion per fiscal year, or about \$17.5 billion total over the next five years.

Operationally, how are we going to effectively put such funds to use?

The American Embassy in Islamabad is under a virtual lockdown because of security concerns.

We have withdrawn critical staff from our key consular outpost along the Pakistani frontier and, because of the difficult security environment, our Foreign Service officers generally serve only one year tours in Pakistan.

This means that they will have barely begun to understand their brief before they are rotated out and we lose critical institutional memory.

The Administration proposes to remedy these difficulties, in part, with an \$800 million request in the supplemental appropriation bill for embassy security, construction and maintenance for Pakistan.

Completion of these projects, however, will, in some cases, take several months and, in others, many years.

While issues of U.S. diplomatic capacity get sorted out, the administration has suggested that it may allocate much of the proposed increase in nonmilitary aid primarily toward budget support.

Any proposed U.S. budget support would be in addition to at least \$14 billion committed by the international financial institutions through 2013.

Some would contend that enhanced trade with Pakistan may be far more economically meaningful than expanded aid.

There are legislative efforts we're told the Administration supports that would create Reconstruction Opportunity Zones in Afghanistan and the border areas of Pakistan.

Unfortunately, about a third of Pakistan's annual exports to the U.S. would be excluded from the definition of eligible products.

There is limited industrial activity on the border areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The Pakistani state is finding it hard to provide for basic amenities for its current population, much less after the expected boom in its population size.

Further, under the circumstances entrepreneurs are likely to be wary of new investments in the proposed industrial zones.

Turning to the immediate security concerns and urgently needed assistance on this front, there needs to be a secure and reliable sources of funding – not just for military assistance, but to assist the police and civilian law enforcement as the first line of defense against extremists.

Some observers have recently argued that past cut-offs which, in turn, affected IMET programs, have seriously “harmed our bilateral efforts” and have made those Pakistani officers not participating in IMET increasingly vulnerable to Islamist militants.

Ambassador Holbrooke do you see any correlation between this and the rising pro-Taliban sentiment within the ranks of the Pakistani military?

This raises the core question of political will, as implicit in proposals to dramatically ramp up U.S. foreign assistance, is the assumption that Pakistan’s political class shares the increasing U.S. concern about the threat posed to their own country by Islamist radicals.

If U.S. and Pakistani strategic priorities are seriously misaligned, American foreign assistance will be of fleeting significance.

Congress and the Executive Branch must move quickly toward a common understanding on the immediate and longer-term priorities, the appropriate mix of policy instruments to maximize our prospects for success, and the timeline for implementing these different elements of our strategy.

Ultimately, if we are to succeed in eliminating militant safe havens and strengthening Pakistani democracy, it will require steadiness of purpose in Washington, but perhaps more importantly, commensurate commitments by Islamabad.